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ABSTRACT

This document outlines a community-based state school system that allows a large degree of local autonomy in exchange for heightened accountability for school performance. It highlights a model education platform for candidates in the 1994 election. A system of educational excellence for the 21st century would be performance-based, locally controlled, specialized to meet the needs of diverse student populations, adequately and equitably funded, integrated with other community services, and focused on successful transitions. It is recommended that a state task force on the elimination of mandates be established immediately to develop a plan for phasing out virtually all state controls on public school administration. State agencies should focus on developing the capacity to assess whether schools are meeting state standards, rather than on controlling how they meet state standards. In addition, a system of supports should be developed to help schools achieve. (LMI)

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Panel Update

Newsletter of the *Chicago Panel on School Policy*

Volume IX, Number III — Summer 1994

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Education in the 21st Century: A Model for Statewide Reform

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Panel Update

Newsletter of the *Chicago Panel on School Policy*

Volume IX, Number III Summer 1994

Education in the 21st Century: A Model for Statewide Reform

by G. Alfred Hess, Jr.

Illinois stands at a critical turning point in the operation of its public schools. Although public education has been the predominant enterprise of state government during most of the 20th century, during the latter part of this century, the state has progressively diminished the importance of its public schools. Highway and prison construction have replaced schooling as the preoccupation of the state, and the growing costs of health care have muscled their way into state financial priorities. As a result, state support for the public schools has not kept pace with inflation, but the imposition of new mandates has far exceeded inflationary demands!

In response, some educators say, "Just give us enough money and we'll do the job." At the other extreme, voucher advocates say, "Put in a market system, and the schools will fix themselves." Neither of these alternatives is adequate to move Illinois into the 21st century.

At the beginning of the 20th century, public education in Illinois, as elsewhere, adopted the model of industrial efficiency; schools became places where students were divided by age into groups that could be similarly processed by workers who were largely interchangeable. State credentials assured all workers had similar capabilities, and various state mandates controlled virtually every dimension of the schooling process. Small school districts were deemed to be inefficient and forced to consolidate, but industrial efficiency models demand a further radical reduction in the number of districts. Only the most affluent of school districts now have the resources to go beyond the state's mandates and exercise local control over the discretionary aspects of schooling.

Editor's Note:

The Panel's executive director, G. Alfred Hess, Jr., through conversations with education policy experts across the state, has developed a model education platform for candidates in the 1994 election. *Towards a 21st Century System of Educational Excellence in Illinois* outlines a community-based state school system that allows a large degree of local autonomy in exchange for heightened accountability for school performance. In this special issue of *Panel Update*, a condensation of that model platform is presented to further the discussion about the shape of public education in the next century. It does not reflect adopted positions of the *Chicago Panel on School Policy*.

Meanwhile, more and more kids were falling through the cracks or were not responding to the batch processing established by the system. The industrial efficiency state system required a weeding out of all of the raw material that did not measure up, and a funnelling of those misfits into a separate, auxiliary system whose output was of lesser importance. Vocational education, Special Education, Bilingual Education, and compensatory aid were established for those who did not fit in the standard, middle class classroom. But as the state's resources grew tighter, even the basic system for most middle class kids began to be strangled. Today, students in our best schools are not adequately learning to think critically while those trapped in our worst schools do not even acquire the basic skills needed for living cooperatively in democratic communities. (see 21st Century Schools, page two)

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(21st Century Schools, from page one)

Reintegrating Schools in Communities: The Hope for Illinois' Future

It is time to stop the century long flirtation with bureaucratic efficiency that has worked to disconnect schools from their communities and is providing unacceptable levels of student success. Small towns across Illinois have seen their schools plucked out of their midst in the name of economic efficiency, only to see the town wither and die with the closing of its central public institution. Inner city communities have seen their local schools incorporated into large bureaucratic systems, whose employees, drawn from across their metropolitan areas, are only interested in leaving the neighborhood as soon as the kids leave the building. In more affluent suburban areas, professional educators, with the best of intentions, tell parents to leave the education of their children in the professionals' hands and make parents feel unwelcome in school buildings.

But kids refuse to learn only from their schools. They watch television and learn what our society really values. They walk down the streets of their neighborhoods and learn what adults really do when there are too few jobs to support their community's families. They walk through their towns and see the creeping decay and learn the meaning of disinvestment as they climb on buses to leave town to go to school. They wander through suburban shopping malls and learn that life is really all about having all of these things that are for sale, and isolating your family in a house on a street that has no sidewalks, not about building a community of people who care for each other. In too many inner city communities, they learn to survive through skills that schools disparage: loud talking, hyper-activity, and mutual protectiveness with like-minded gang members. It should not surprise us that many young people look at what they are learning from their communities and see school-learning as isolated and irrelevant. Meanwhile, educators throw up their hands and say, "What do you expect us to do with these kids?"

...Kids refuse to learn only from their schools. They watch television and learn what our society really values. They walk down the streets of their neighborhoods and learn what adults really do when there are too few jobs to support their community's families...

It should not surprise us that many young people look at what they are learning from their communities and see school-learning as isolated and irrelevant.

In many communities in Illinois, thankfully, this is not the case. Schools still function as an integral part of their communities. Teachers live nearby. Parents are active in the schools. Community events occur in school buildings. School board members are met in the local drug store or coffee shop. Children get the same messages in schools as they do on the streets of the community. But often this happens only in spite of the state system of public education, not because of it.

A reasonable state school system would focus on enlisting the resources of the entire community and of the entire state to educate our young people. A state school system that sought to reintegrate schools and communities would build on many of the strengths now existing in our public schools and in services the state now supports for its citizens. It would have high expectations for the young people we are trying to prepare for adulthood. It would tap into the strengths of our various communities and capture the vitality of the diversity of our citizens. At the same time, it would seek to remove many of the impediments and unnecessary mandates that have developed with the growth of the state and local educational bureaucracy.

Past Policies Lay Foundation for Change But Continue Old Impediments

The State of Illinois, along with many of its sister states, has been moving towards this vision of educational excellence while illogically seeking to hold on to the bureaucratic practices with which many professional educators are comfortable. We must recognize the important steps we have taken, and the impediments that still tie us to the low performance of the past.

· **1983** The National Commission for Excellence in Education released *A Nation At Risk* warning that "a rising tide of mediocrity" threatens our national future.

· **1985** The Illinois General Assembly responds by adopting an Education Reform Act that establishes school report cards, a reading improvement program, and calls for preschooling for all disadvantaged three and four year olds; the law mandates a change in the state's unfair school funding system, but the mandate is revoked the following year.

· **1988** The Chicago School Reform Act is adopted shifting decision-making to the school level and shifting resources to the school level; research reports indicate a third of the city's schools have made significant changes in instruction and a second third have added needed new programs.

· **1989** President Bush and the nation's governors, led by then Governor Clinton, agree on six fundamental goals for public education; in 1994, the Congress adopts these as the nation's goals for the year 2000.

· **1991** The Illinois General Assembly adopts a new, performance-based system of school recognition, focusing on improving every school in the state; the "Accountability Act" threatens sanctions on those that continue to fail.

· **1991** Seventy school districts sue the state for its inadequate and unequal funding; the Attorney General argues, on behalf of the governor, that Illinois children do not have a right to an education so the legislature can fund schools as unequally as it chooses; the districts are now appealing the court's dismissal of the suit.

Thus, Illinois has taken a number of steps that would lead towards a system of public schools that is focused on assuring all of our children a world class education, but it continues to cling to many of the mandates and impediments that prevent our schools from doing what they need to do and it continues to deny to many communities the resources needed for change to occur. To move into the 21st century, Illinois must shift its focus. While continuing to require higher levels of achievement, it must remove the impediments that hamper school leaders and it must provide them the resources necessary for success.

A Community-based Strategy for Successful Schools

A system of educational excellence for the 21st century, for the State of Illinois, would have six essential features. Each of these features has a series of critical components which would lead towards their success. The education system must be:

- **Performance based** rather than focused on mandates and regulation of inputs.
- **Locally controlled** with the state monitoring for successful outcomes.
- **A diversity of programs** that give students choices in their public education.
- **Adequately and equitably funded**, based on the resources of the whole state.
- **Integrated with other community services** to assure all children's needs are met.
- **Focused on successful transitions** from school to work or to higher education.

A Performance-Based Education System

The State of Illinois, with support from both major political parties, has already begun to move towards an educational system which is most concerned with what students should know and be able to do. Replacing a system based on "seat time" with a system based on student learning and capacity development is logical and necessary for the state to be successful in assuring its citizens an opportunity to earn a living and to live comfortably in democratic communities.

But, as we move forward to establish expectations for student achievement that schools should be able to meet, we continue to mandate *how* schools should operate to reach those standards. This is illogical and a fruitless waste of effort and resources. If schools had been able to reach the standards we are setting by the state controlling the ways in which they operate, we would not be so concerned with school reform. We must begin to phase out the state's efforts to control *how* schools meet the new state standards, as we further develop the capacity to assess *whether* they are meeting those standards. We must also develop the system of *supports* to assist schools to achieve more than they ever have before and *sanctions* for the adults running those schools if they fail to improve.

Illinois now has annual report cards that provide the state and the public a wide range of information about the schools and their performance. We are developing a system of assessing each school's performance and its plan of improvement. Further refinements in this process of *recognition and accountability*

(see 21st Century Schools, page four)

(21st Century Schools, from page three)

will be necessary, but the basic program should be supported and the resources provided for its rapid development.

But it is unfair to expect schools and school districts to meet these new standards if all of their resources are now tied up in meeting state mandates on how to operate. For example, our current approach requires that students sit in front of an English teacher for four years, in front of a math teacher for three years, and in front of a science teacher for two. This way of controlling schools divides up the real world in an arbitrary way that assumes that English teachers don't know anything about history and chemistry teachers don't know anything about writing. This sharp division of labor treats students as if they were products on an assembly line, having wheels, doors, and motors installed in their bodies. The current system virtually prevents schools from experimenting with having students learn in interdisciplinary classes that combine various subjects. It also limits schools to classroom settings for learning instead of using "real world" contexts for experiential learning.

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The state must get out of the business of regulating "seat time" and into assisting schools in restructuring themselves to provide the learning opportunities that will help their students know what they ought to know and be able to do what they should be able to do. As the National Commision on Learning and Time has suggested, in the past we have kept the time students spend in school constant and let their achievement vary; today, we must gaurantee that everyone learns adequately and let the time needed vary.

A state task force on mandate elimination should be established immediately to lay a plan for phasing out virtually all state controls on how public schools should be run. The civil rights of individuals with special needs must be protected, but virtually all other dictates to schools should be removed prior to the beginning of the 21st century. Meanwhile, the new school recognition and accountability program, with sanctions on adults running schools in which students continue to fail to meet reasonable expectations, must be fully implemented and refined.

A Locally Controlled System Meeting State Learning Objectives

Individual schools are the primary sites of learning for Illinois' children. The state has focused its report cards and its recognition and accountability system on the performance of each school. But in many other regards, the state acts as if schools did not exist, focusing many of its actions only on school districts, which are arbitrary units of school governance. Even the form of these governing units differs. In some areas, there are separate districts for elementary or high schools. In other areas, all grades are included but districts are divided along geographic boundaries that irrationally divide communities.

This governance structure is one more historical appendage of an industrial efficiency model for public education. Efficiency experts call loudly for further reduction to about 100 districts. However, to do so is to sacrifice the ability of local school leaders to try to meet the differing needs of students in different communities. So the "consolidators" fight with the "community control" forces. This is a fruitless and misdirected conflict. In a Community-Based System of Educational Excellence, the state would focus its efforts on individual schools—the actual sites of student learning—and allow the various levels of administrative bureaucracy at the district, county, and regional level to wither, unless they can demonstrate an important support function enabling school improvement.

If individual schools are to be held accountable for the performance of their students, then individual schools must also have the responsibility of deciding how to improve themselves. They must have the flexibility and resources to enact those plans of improvement. Thus, a critical component of education reform is *school based management* for every school in Illinois.

The state should recognize that individual governance of individual schools has been a reality for some time in the more than 200 school districts that only include one school. The state board of education should look carefully at these single school districts to discover both the advantages and disadvantages of these districts. One advantage of moving towards a statewide system of school based management is that it reintegrates the effective control of individual schools within the communities in which they are set. It bypasses the fears frequently raised by threats of district consolidation by moving real control of the school back to the community level. Frequently, it is this fear of loss of community control which spurs the greatest opposition to district consolidation. This would allow districts to consolidate to provide better service to individual schools or to wither away if they are ineffective, in either case providing better efficiency.

The ultimate form of school based management would be schools which are directly related to the state, without any intermediary school district. A number of states have already enacted legislation to experiment with the development of such schools, called *Charter Schools*. Illinois should immediately move to create a system of up to 200 charter schools to investigate the problems and possibilities in the state relating more directly to individual schools statewide. Funding should come directly from the state, and the charters should be granted by the state board of education, state universities, or local districts under criteria designed to assure stability of operations, general admissibility of students, responsiveness to the local community, and continuance dependent upon meeting, after a reasonable period, of the state's learner outcomes goals. Charter schools could be designed by existing school districts, groups of teachers, non-profit organizations, or local governance bodies of existing public schools. They would have to meet the current non-sectarian criterion of public schools and be willing to accept a wide variety of students. They would be public schools established within the geographic boundaries of existing school districts, but would not be subject to the governance of those districts. Thereby, the current geographic monopoly on public education would be ended. The system of charter schools would then represent a pilot transition program either towards a new state system focused on individual schools or a new mixed system of governance in which the function of school districts is shifted dramatically from control to support.

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A Diversity of Programs Open to All

Except in the most affluent of school districts, public school programs in Illinois are remarkably similar and remarkably dull. The "one size fits all" model of public schools, with dispiriting segregative programs for students with special needs, limited English proficiency, or disadvantage due to poverty has limited the opportunities available to students and made schools boring for many. The widespread acceptance of and competition for entry into magnet schools, which emphasize various specialties and often provide

(see 21st Century Schools, page six)

Gaps in your library?

The Chicago Panel on School Policy publishes a range of useful resources, including the *Chicago Public Schools Databook*, *Panel Update*, *Reform Report*, LSC suggestion booklets, and the major reports of the *Researching and Monitoring School Reform* project.

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To request back copies of Panel publications or receive information on Panel membership, call 346-2202.

(21st Century Schools, from page five)

non-traditional learning opportunities shows that parents and students want their schools to be more diverse. However, as long as school enrollment is rigidly controlled by geography, allowing school diversity to emerge is problematic. It seems we feel free to force children to go to dull schools as long as all are equally dull, but it seems wrong to force students to attend a school that specializes in science if their aptitude is towards the arts. A different kind of thinking, the kind that emerges from the development of magnet schools, is required to solve this problem.

Magnet schools have long been a way of providing a different kind of school experience for students within larger school districts. School Based Management in Chicago is encouraging a similar diversity of programming between schools. Charter schools would be another way of beginning to provide alternative educational programs for students.

Minnesota allows public school students to take courses in community colleges or universities or museums to receive credit towards their high school graduation. The state pays the tuition for such students to attend *alternative learning sites* while deducting a proportional amount from its support of local schools. Similarly, experiential learning opportunities in potential work-places might provide part of the educational program of some students.

Magnet schools, school based management encouragement of diverse curricula, charter schools, and alternative learning sites all assume students choose to enroll in them. A state public education system which encourages this diversity must also allow for a greater enrollment choice by its public school students. Illinois should create a system of public education that provides a rich diversity of educational programs open to all public school students in the state.

An Adequately and Equitably Funded Educational System

In 1991, the Illinois State Board of Education conducted a study of seven school districts, located across the state, that were thought to provide a model of an adequate education. Most educators accept the definition of an adequate educational program for elementary schools that emerged from that study. The estimated cost of that adequate education for each student was about $4,000. By that measure, for that school year, 80 percent of the students in Illinois were deprived of what the state itself considers adequate.

There is little disagreement that the disparity in resources is inequitable when the state can assure less than $3,000 per pupil for a large number of the state's children, while an equally large number have more than twice as much spent for their education.

Illinois must change its system of support for public schools to provide adequate support for each child and to assure that all children have an equal chance to be successful.

In addition, there is little disagreement that the disparity in resources is inequitable when the state can assure less than $3,000 per pupil for a large number of the state's children, while an equally large number have more than twice as much spent for their education. Illinois must change its system of support for public schools to provide adequate support for each child and to assure that all children have an equal chance to be successful. Only when there is a level playing field can we fairly hold schools accountable for their student outcomes.

The current system of funding schools depends entirely too much upon property taxes. Revenues from property taxes vary enormously from school district to school district, depending upon the wealth of the community. School districts with large concentrations of industrial or commercial property can raise huge sums of money while asking the average taxpayer to contribute very little, much less than his or her fair share. Districts with little industry or commerce and modestly priced homes can raise very little, while over-burdening their taxpayers for even that little bit. In Niles, the elementary school tax rate is only one dollar per $100 worth of property value, while in Park Forest, the tax rate is nearly $7.50. The program these two Cook County suburban school districts can pro-

vide is inversely proportional to the tax burden: Niles provides a teacher for every nine students, while children of the high tax Park Forest district must share a teacher among 23. A system that asks some taxpayers to assume a burden 7.5 times heavier than that of their neighbors and then requires that they send their children to schools offering less than half the educational programming is unfair and must be replaced.

The new finance system for Illinois' public schools must be built on the principles of equity for students and equity for taxpayers. That means all of the state's children must have access to all of the states taxable resources and taxpayers should share relatively equally, on the basis of their ability to pay, for the education of the state's children. Since these are the fundamental issues involved in the school finance law suit by districts that represent half the state's children, that suit should be settled by a consent decree in which the state acknowledges that education is a fundamental right of all children in Illinois.

The new state school finance system should recognize that all school taxes, whether on the value of property or income or sales or gambling revenues, are legislatively permitted or mandated by the state. In recognition of this fact, two midwestern neighbors, Kansas and Michigan, have created statewide taxes on property that serve to equalize both funding and tax burden. Illinois should either incorporate such an approach or should guarantee that school districts receive equivalent return on their tax rates to those of the richest school districts in the state.

With a much greater portion of school funding flowing directly through the state treasury, the state would be able to move financially in the same direction that it has moved in holding individual schools accountable for their performance. A new school finance system should be designed to fund primarily schools, not school districts. This could be done either through direct pass throughs of funds, as in England where districts must give the schools 85 percent of all receipts, or better, in direct funding to schools who could then buy services from districts or from other providers if they can provide better service.

Finally, the state must move to deal with the impending crisis in school facilities. Rather than funding the rebuilding of individual schools that burn down or get destroyed by a tornado, as the General Assembly now does, the state must embark on a systematic way to address the deterioration of school facilities in those areas with the fewest resources for rehabilitation or rebuilding. The state should revive its Capital Development Board with a massive school facilities program, bonded and guaranteed through the state.

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Integration of Community Services

For many families in Illinois, schooling is just one of the services directly provided by the state. Of course, most of us take for granted the services the state provides in general: highways and roads, hospitals and mental health centers, facilities for recreation, support for economic development and care for the environment. But in addition to these generally provided services, many families need help with specific problems: finding a job and securing support until one can be found, meeting extraordinary health problems, housing, and support for families whose adult members need help in providing an adequate home for their children.

Characteristically, the various representatives of the state working with an individual family are unaware of other representatives of the state or local governments working with the same family. The family's problems are divided up by "turf" responsibilities, and each specialty grabs its share of the family's life and adds it to some worker's case load. Each state service now assumes the client family has no other needs than the ones it is designed to serve. Under this system, either the client qualifies for the agency's service or he or she doesn't. Nobody works with the

(see 21st Century Schools, page eight)

(21st Century Schools, from page seven)

family as a whole. But all of the family's problems are carried with the child to school and all of those problems affect the child's ability to benefit from the educational setting provided.

It is time to overcome this "divide and destroy" policy of state services to our most needy citizens. We must overcome the specialization of services by the state in order to see families as whole units whose needs must be comprehensively addressed. As the one state institution intended to provide continuous services to families for durations of more than a decade, it is logical for schools to play a central role in this coordination and integration of services. We must reorganize the family-oriented services of the state so that information is shared, and services are integrated. Illinois must take an aggressive posture to redefine its services to focus on meeting the needs of its citizens, rather than the needs of its bureaucrats.

Currently, less than 50 percent of our high school graduates go on to higher education. Yet if you go into a typical Illinois high school, you will find counsellors guiding potential college entrants...but few counsellors guiding either graduates or school leavers on the requirements for job entrance or the means of applying for and securing a job.

Transitions to Work and Further Education

The system of public education for Illinois that was established in the early years of the 20th century was designed so that most students would fail their way out of it. The system was designed to produce the most academically capable students as candidates for higher education. The rest, the vast majority simply left the system at some point, either by dropping out or after high school graduation. The industrial efficiency model of schooling assumed those less academically successful would fit nicely into assembly line jobs, employing a set of relatively simple skills in a repetitive way. A high school diploma is hardly a requirement for tightening lug nuts on automobile wheels.

But as the 21st century dawns, the nature of work in America is changing. Many industries are redefining the nature of the work they expect of their employees, emphasizing more complex skills and an interrelation of tasks that avoid the dull, repetitive activity that has led to low quality American products.

Currently, less than 50 percent of our high school graduates go on to higher education. Yet if you go into a typical Illinois high school, you will find counsellors guiding potential college entrants on admissions policies and entrance requirements, but few counsellors guiding either graduates or school leavers on the requirements for job entrance or the means of applying for and securing a job. We must be as concerned to assure the successful transition of those who go directly into the job market as we are to place our graduates in institutions of higher education.

Fortunately, there has been an effort to address this problem in new ways. To adequately keep pace with the redesigning of work being undertaken by many American industries, a new focus on the school to work transition is being undertaken and merits the state's support.

Once again, this new focus will move the public education system away from a focus on seat time and into a focus on learning opportunities, particularly ones that do not comfortably fit into fifty minute class periods. Employers, supervisors, and current workers may play a far more prominent role than teachers in this new system. And schools, like Taft High School in Chicago, may find themselves redesigning their programs to provide different students with different learning opportunities, depending upon the career choice they currently feel is appropriate for themselves. Such an approach will require a community focus.

The school to work transition focus will build upon the many existing programs in cooperative learning and vocational magnet schools. They will encourage school-based enterprises such as student run school stores. They may include career academies and tech-prep programs that redesign the final two years of high school to coordinate with two year technical programs in middle colleges or community colleges. They may emphasize youth apprenticeships that replace tradi-

(see 21st Century Schools, page nine)

Chicago School-To-Work Partnership Gains Momentum, Seeks Federal Support

On May 9, the Chicago School-To-Work Steering Committee, managed by Panel Assistant Director Barbara Buell and National Alliance of Business Regional Vice President Diana Robinson, applied for federal funds to start the School-To-Work Opportunities Local Partnership program. The Committee requested $2.2 million in federal funds, administered jointly by the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education, to implement the Chicago program for its first year. Over $300 million in federal funds will be made available by the Clinton Administration's School-To-Work Opportunities Act.

The Chicago Steering Committee, a coalition of over 50 educators, employers, government officials, community based organizations, and support-service providers, expects to be notified of the proposal's status by late August. Committee members are currently concentrating on developing other resources, building public awareness of school-to-work issues, formulating evaluation procedures, and planning curriculum.

If funded, there will be three main components to the Chicago initiative: the Chicago Careers Council, several Career Clusters centered on different industries, and a School-To-Work Resource Center.

The Council will set school-to-work policy, monitor and evaluate the system, coordinate standards and certification, and develop new resources. It will be comprised of representatives from the various Career Clusters, with a majority drawn from local employers.

Each Cluster will administer school-based, work-based and community-based learning opportunities by connecting employer, educator and community resources to a selected industry group. Fifteen preliminary industry areas have been identified based upon labor market projections. They are: food service/hospitality, public service, insurance, built-environments, energy, arts and entertainment, transportation, health and medical services, finance, information systems/communications, personal/business services, agriculture, manufacturing, retail, education. Clusters will be comprised of educators, employers, and representatives of community based organizations. Each cluster will develop curriculum, identify skill requirements and coordinate job placement. During the first year of the initiative, possible Clusters include food service/hospitality, health/medical care, manufacturing, and personal/business services.

The Resource Center will serve as a clearinghouse of school-to-work information. In addition to supplying current labor market data, the Resource Center will provide a job bank for employers, assessment tests for students, and assistance in curriculum development and career guidance. A bulk of the federal start-up funds will be devoted to establishing the Resource Center, which will house staff and serve as

(see School-to-Work, page ten)

(21st Century Schools, from page eight)

tional classroom learning but merit graduation certificates on the basis of adequate student preparation to meet the state's learner outcomes goals. The State of Illinois must commit important resources to develop an educational system that is as committed to student success for those entering the world of work as it is for those heading off to college.

Conclusion: We Must Start Now To Build a Community Oriented System of Educational Excellence

In the 1998 gubernatorial election, we will choose the governor who will welcome in the 21st century. However, Illinois must *now* begin to face resolutely the new needs of that century, and the adjustments those needs will require of our public schools. There is much of value in our public schools as they now exist. We must build upon their current strengths. But we must be willing to shed the aspects of the system that were designed for an "industrial age" as we move into a century most agree will be more appropriately called an "information age." We must redesign our state's system of public education to prepare our young people for life in that new century. ●

(School-to-Work, from page nine)

headquarters for the entire Chicago effort.

In addition to funding local partnerships, the Departments of Labor and Education recently issued a request for proposals for school-to-work programs in poor urban and rural communities. This program will award $10 million to 15 to 25 partnerships serving youth in high poverty areas of less than 50,000. The Steering Committee has offered technical assistance to organizations interested in applying.

For information contact Barbara Buell at (312) 346-2202 or Diana Robinson at (312) 341-9766.

Budget Balanced on Borrowed Bucks; Major Structural Imbalances Remain

On July 27, the Chicago Board of Education approved a budget of $2.92 billion for the 1994-95 school year. For the first time in four years, the budget is balanced, thanks largely to heavy borrowing made necessary by last fall's fiscal crisis. Schools will open on time in September. Of last year's $378 million bond issue, $203 million was used to balance the 1994-95 budget. These funds have now been used up, and debt service for the bond issue will average approximately $40 million annually for the next fourteen years. The system expects to face a deficit of at least $325 million in the 1995-96 school year.

During the summer, a "surplus" of $64 million became a hotly debated issue at Pershing Road and in the media. $50 million of this positive fund balance can be attributed to savings when positions opened by last summer's five-plus-five retirement program were not filled during the 1993-94 school year. To a large degree, this one-time savings is reflective of the chaos brought by last fall's budget crisis. Many principals, uncertain of their actual budget and staffing allocations until halfway through the school year, were unable to fill vacant positions when funds finally became available. The remaining $14 million is attributed to larger than expected revenues from general state aid.

$40 million of the surplus will be spent on computer system upgrades, professional development of teachers, science equipment, local school management support, facilities improvement, school supplies, and intervention programs. The remaining $24 million will be applied to next years projected shortfall. The Panel and other reform groups recommended saving the entire $64 million dollars, or at the very least, devoting any spending to one-time improvements.

The Chicago Public Schools still face a huge structural imbalance between revenues and expenditures. Revenues will drop by over $200 million next year, as funds from last year's bond issue dry up and debt service increases. A corresponding drop in expenditures to balance the budget would be an educational disaster. Without an increase in state support and a revamped state system of school finance, Chicago students will likely face a repeat of last fall's chaos in September of 1995. While the state government has been unwilling to deal with the school finance issue prior to November's gubernatorial election, the Board of Education is counting on the legislature to address school funding before the Chicago system goes bankrupt. However, the public relations fallout from spending over half of a highly publicized surplus remains to be seen.

Researching and Monitoring Update:

New LSC Checklist To Be Released this Fall

A Checklist for Local School Councils, the latest suggestion booklet by the *Monitoring and Researching School Reform* project will be released this fall.

The Checklist incorporates data on school governance gathered over several years, using a framework from *Local School Governance in the Third Year of Reform* (1993). That report identified four approaches used by LSCs to run their schools: limited governance, moderate governance, balanced governance, and excessive governance.

The Panel encourages the balanced approach, in which principals and LSC chairs share leadership responsibilities, all council members are actively involved and generally supportive of professional staff, and information is shared freely.

The booklet describes factors that enable an LSC to govern effectively, encouraging councils to:

- Compare the different approaches taken by LSCs.
- Understand the limitations or advantages of the different approaches.
- Determine which approach an LSC has taken.
- Identify strategies to enable councils to make the transition to more effective school governance.

The booklet will be distributed to every LSC member in the city. Additional copies will be made available through the Panel.

CPS Reform Office Requests LSC Training Materials

The Chicago Public Schools Office for Reform is developing a comprehensive Local School Council Training Manual for the use of organizations and individuals working to support LSCs. The Task Force on Training, which is coordinating the project, has invited reform organizations to submit materials for the manual.

Iva Lane, the Panel's Director of Information and Advocacy, is a member of the Task Force, which also includes representatives from Parents United for a Responsible Education (PURE), the Coalition for Improved Education in South Shore (CIESS), and the CPS Office for Reform. Organizations whose materials are included will receive acknowledgment in the manual and a free copy.

Materials should be submitted by September 30 to: Ms. Donna Sumanas, Coordinator, Bureau of Training, Office of Reform, 5E(n), 1819 West Pershing Road, Chicago, Illinois 60609. Camera-ready copies or computer discs would be appreciated. Originals cannot be returned. For more information, contact Donna Sumanas at 535-7407.

Staff News

On July 7, **Research Director John Easton** began a one year leave of absence, during which he will be on loan to the Chicago Board of Education, serving as Interim Director of the Department of Research, Evaluation, and Planning. John's appointment is part of a collaboration with the Center for School Improvement and the Consortium on Chicago School Research to redesign research at the Board of Education. University of Chicago professor and Panel consultant **Anthony Bryk** will work closely with John, serving as an advisor to the General Superintendent.

While the Panel will miss John's leadership and skill, his new role will significantly benefit school reform. Under John's guidance the *Monitoring and Researching the Effects of School Reform* project compiled extensive data on reform, releasing over 15 major reports and several suggestion booklets. **Research Coordinator Susan Ryan** is coordinating the project during John's absence. **Professor Mark Smylie** of the University of Illinois at Chicago has been retained as a project consultant to provide evaluation and additional guidance.

Suzanne Bavly, formerly of the Consortium on Chicago School Research, has joined the Monitoring and Researching Department as an Analyst. Bavly is a doctoral candidate in education at the University of Chicago.

Panel Update

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